

Elections in Nigeria and Foreign Democratic Assistance, 2015-2019: Key Lessons and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on elections and foreign democracy assistance to Nigeria in 2015–2019: Key lessons and challenges. The study combined historical and descriptive research methods. While the historical design provided a guide into Nigeria's democratic journey, the descriptive method helped us explain clearly these impeding factors that have hindered foreign democratic assistance from falling short of the desired standard in the country. The data was gathered through secondary sources. The realistic theory of change by Anderson, a modification of Carol's (1972) change model theory, was used as the framework of analysis. The study revealed that (1) Nigeria received democratic assistance between 2015 and 2019 from the US, UK, EU, and other major international partners engaging in democratic promotion. (2) In spite of billions of dollars received as foreign democratic assistance, her political development has remained gloomy. (3) International promoters of democracy in Nigeria have clearly defined objectives with their philanthropic and international assistance for democratic transition, but in a bid to promote democracy, in the context of globalization; promoting a free market economy and favourable investment opportunities for their multinational corporations. Lastly, the result shows some key lessons and implications that represent the immediate conclusions and recommendations of this study, such as that, for FDA to be successful, democratisation processes need to be driven from within and supported by (at least some) key domestic actors, achieve a balance between different goals, connect with the grass-roots level, incorporate civil society, and so on. Thus, the election violence, rigging, manipulation, and imposition of candidates that characterised Nigerian elections do not in any way relate to or correlate with foreign democratic assistance objectives.

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INTRODUCTION

Since Nigeria's political independence in 1960, she has had eleven general elections that took place, with two of them in the First Republic, two in the Second Republic, one in the aborted Third Republic and six in the current Fourth Republic. However, following the democratic transitions of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the ebbing of the Cold War, democratic assistance became a key element of foreign policy and development assistance. In addition to governments, multilateral organisations and a large

number of national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) renewed and expanded their commitments to international engagement to support democracy. A consensus developed within the international community that considerations of national sovereignty should not shelter a country's internal political arrangements from outside observation or criticism. Thus, not only did democracy emerge as a universal aspiration, but norms also emerged in the international community

indicating that it was legitimate to have an interest in promoting and supporting democracy abroad (Burnell, 2000, Anyalebechi, 2022).

Thus since the rapid growth of democracy promotion in the 1990s, international donor agencies in collaboration with civil societies have been pushing for electoral support globally and most especially in emerging democracies (Abdullahi, 2015). One of these developing democracies that have been receiving attention and support from international donor agencies for electoral conduct is Nigeria. Nigeria has been receiving foreign democratic assistance since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999, with hundreds of billions of dollars and with other non-monetary measures, through different international agencies (Bariledum et al., 2016). These international organisations are mainly from the US and other developed countries such as UNDP and its umbrella organisations. The organisations are often engaged in the act of either monitoring of elections or providing financial and technical support to the electoral body, civil societies and other specifically targeted groups in the country. These benefiting organizations are urban based while the bulk of the population are grassroots based which created a huge disconnection.

Despite this belief and with a multitude of competitive electoral cycles, a range of evidence suggests that international support to democratic transitions often falls short of the desired standard and elections alone cannot resolve deeper political and social problems besetting states. Whilst significant progress has been made towards a more nuanced, harmonised and politically-informed approach to democratic transitions by the international community, a number of obstacles continue to impede more effective international support to democracies. These obstacles had triggered the debate about the current health of democratic systems and the need to look more closely at the actual objective of foreign democratic assistance considering the enormous resources put into it.

Thus, having observed that from 1999 democratization process to date, donors have assisted Nigeria with hundreds of billions of dollars and with other non-monetary measures, this paper therefore evaluates the objectives of foreign democratic assistance, particularly with a view to ascertaining its key lessons and challenges in the form of 'principles for election support' to Nigeria taking into consideration the impacts of endogenous and exogenous variables.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Election in Nigeria

Election is considered as the backbone of democratic rule, and it is the system or an institution that sustains democracy and provides healthy competition for power and control of the government. An election is a periodic event that is prepared in which an individual is elected or voted for a given office (Kapur, 2009, p.142). The periodic election is an accepted norm and standard of global practice and method of that determines who gets power or controls policy making. The election has been the normal practice in which modern representative democracy operates (Almond & Verba, 1963, p.63). Thus Osumah (2002) elucidates that the basic objective of election is to select the official decision makers who are supposed to represent citizens-interest. Elections, according to him extend and enhance the amount of popular participation in the political system.

Since an election is the process by which the people select and control their representatives. It means that without election, there can be no representative government. This assertion is, to a large extent, correct as an election is, probably, the most reliable means through which both the government and representatives can be made responsible to the people who elect them. But besides, aiding leadership succession, election as a concept embolden political accountability, participation and gives voice and power to the people. It also symbolize the expression of the people's ultimate will and remain a stabilization machinery in any democratic process (Alapiki, 2004).

However, election is a legitimising phenomenon which has the role of giving leaders the authority to govern. In a democratic regime, there is provision for participation through periodic election where citizens are allowed to vote for their leaders and where the leaders compete for power through selling their ideas in a competitive contest (Dahl, 2000). Hence, election is a major requirement for a healthy and sustainable democracy, irrespective of the system of democracy operated. As observed above, election in Nigeria has been taken place periodically since the resumption of democratic rule in 1999. The problem with elections in Nigeria is the conduct and the procedure in which it is undertaken and the outcome which has not been encouraging since 1999 to 2019.

Regrettably, the history of election in Africa and Nigeria in particular has shown that, the continent cannot rely on their various electoral structures and processes to evolve the kind of leaders they want, the kind of leaders that can improve the deplorable

material conditions of the people (also see Mackintosh in Chazan, 1979, p.36). In fact the transition process itself which is faltering and faulty from the inception of the Fourth Republic is perceived by many as pseudo transition organised, supervised and ushered in by military in militaristic style. The major issues of election conduct in Nigeria includes: impositions of candidates, the politics of ethnicity and religion, compromising INEC, election results are pre-determined in which electoral process was violated, and democratic governance is not in accordance with democratic principles, issues of violence, money politics, nature of political parties devoid of ideology or any democratic principles except capturing of power for personal gain at all cost and so on (Auwal 2015; Adetula 2008; and Abdullahi 2015).

This assertion was supported by Wilmot, (2019) who her emphasis on the just concluded 2019 General election stated that the election were replete with logistical failures and delays, misconduct, voting irregularities, and violence that resulted in the deaths of at least 58 people since the presidential elections began, and approximately 600 people since the start of campaigning in November 2018. She went further to say that Authorities and civil society groups are now seeking to determine how credible the results of the elections were and how and whom to hold accountable for any misconduct—questions which have significant bearing on Nigeria's democracy in the coming years.

History and Objectives of Foreign Democratic Assistance

According to Burnell (2005), Foreign democratic assistance may be called and defined in many terms—democracy promotion, democracy support, democracy assistance, democracy aid, political development aid and so on, but it generally encompasses foreign policy activities intended to encourage the transition to or improvement of democracy in other countries.

Although, the most basic definition of the term foreign aid or assistance is "resources given from one country to another." But it's usually understood to mean money, materials, and manpower given or loaned by governments, organizations, and individuals in rich countries to help people in poor countries. So also referred to as international aid, or development aid, foreign democratic assistance is a category distinct from military aid. Aid flows through several major channels.

The earliest form of foreign aid was military assistance designed to help warring parties that were in some way considered strategically important.

However, Hjertholm and White (2001) espoused that several aid institutions developed from the organizations created to cater for the aftermath of war: Oxfam first catered for refugees from Greece, CARE was originally the Centre for American Relief in Europe (the Europe later became everywhere). The UN's development work began with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) founded during the war (1943), and the World Bank, whose full name is the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, began with loans for reconstruction. The relative success of the Marshall Plan of 1948 was also a major premise upon which the necessity and importance of foreign aid was hinged. A final feature of the post-war international scene of importance was the first wave of independence, creating a constituency for aid. In addition to the above, foreign aid also played out as one of the major dynamics of the Cold War between the United States and the former Union of Soviet Socialist republics.

Arising from the above, it can be concluded as Stevenson, (2006) noted that the modern concept of foreign aid or assistance from mainly rich industrialized countries to less economically developed countries, has its roots in the post Second World war reconstruction era. Todaro (1977), also submitted that since the era of the Marshall Plan, the aid system has remained a subsisting phenomenon of the global economic arrangement. This view has been corroborated by Tarp (2012) who cited that after the success of the Marshall Plan, the attention of industrialized nations turned to the developing countries, many of which became independent during the 1960s.

Following Thomas (2004) observed that, as democratization process spread through Latin America and parts of Asia in the 1980s, Western donors began to consider how they might widen their assistance portfolios to support this trend. Some donors began to carry out assistance programmes considered as pro-democratic, particularly relating to elections and human rights.

On this basis, the 1990s witnessed a mushrooming of democracy assistance projects from bilateral governments and related efforts by non-governmental and multilateral organisations. It is difficult to provide figures on the aggregate amount of democracy assistance due to definitional problems and weaknesses in recording the data. However, it is estimated as observed by Carothers (2004: p2) and Youngs (2006), that by the turn of the millennium, approximately US\$2 billion per year – about half from private and public sources in the US and half

from largely public sources in Europe – were allocated for democracy-related projects. Throughout the world, American, European and multilateral organisations have engaged in a variety of activities, including advising political parties, providing aid to government agencies, training judges, strengthening civil society, conducting civic education campaigns and helping to develop new constitutions and electoral laws. While the US is by far the single largest provider of democracy assistance internationally, Germany has provided the largest proportion of such funding in Europe, spending around €200 million in 2004 (Thomas, 2004 & Burnell, 2007).

Collaborating, Adetula, Kew and Kwaja (2010) stated that, in Nigeria, during the last decades of military rule (the 1990s), there were intensified pressures from the international community on democratisation. This emanated from the annulment of June 12, 1991, Presidential Election. From 1993 to 1999, the international donors' activities in supporting democratisation in Nigeria emerged in which the European Union, the United States and other international bodies put a limited sanction on Nigeria and drastically limited diplomatic relationship. The Commonwealth countries suspended Nigeria's membership and the country came under heavy criticism by the United Nations and Organisations of African Unity for an alleged human rights violation. The EU suspended project development cooperation in Nigeria. But, even with the sanction, the humanitarian aids activities by the international donors continued. The European Parliament provided a budget of EUR 7 million in 1998 and 1999 to support human rights and democracy in Nigeria. Many Nigerian NGOs and human rights organisations benefitted from the donation by the EU Parliament.

The above analysis indicated clearly that the international donor agencies have been active and present in Nigerian territory even before the inception of the Fourth Republic and they have been actively engaged in foreign democratic support and other humanitarian services. Their activities were later expanded to have involved support to electoral process and conduct when the democratic rule gained ground for deepening and consolidation of democracy. In mid-June 1998, the military administration of General Abdulsalami Abubakar set a quick transition timetable to democracy and in response towards this positive development, the international organisations and international community restored all assistance to the country instantly. The bilateral and multilateral donors provided aids to support the political transition.

They provided technical assistance to key institutions including Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs), political parties, associations and civil society groups. Donor activities in the areas of democracy promotion and good governance increased significantly (Adetula, et al. 2010). Many vital international donor organisations surfaced from 1999 in supporting electoral process in Nigeria including USAID, UKAID, DFID, CIDA, IFES, NDI, IRI, EU providing joint donor basket fund for electoral support to date.

The Commission on Science and Technology Development in the South (COMSATS) in 2007 compiled a directory of international donor and development organisations that are famous and active on the world stage for development aid to various sectors such as democratic promotion, economic sustainability, healthcare foundations, educational foundations, human rights organisations etc. The directory presented about 66 of them out of which this study found the most relevant to have included: United Kingdom Agency for International Development (UKAID), International Federation for Electoral System (IFES), National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), European Union (EU) and European Commonwealth Observer Mission (EUCOM). These were found to be most important because they are actively engaged in donor activities and electoral support in Nigeria since 1999.

However, according to Morton (2013), the major objectives of donor agencies globally involve: fight against worldwide poverty; protection of human rights; eradication of diseases; democratic governance; education; climate change and other global developmental issues.

But generally, Foreign aid is provided to many countries but is concentrated in countries reflecting the priorities of the international community and individual donor states. Lumsdaine (1993), for example, found that humanitarian concerns and moral values were a primary motivation in the allocation of multilateral foreign aid. For Lancaster (2007) the provision of foreign aid has developed into an international norm. Rich countries provide assistance to poor countries to better the human condition. States are subject to the norms of behavior established by the international community.

Consequently, researchers have determined that foreign aid is often provided for interests other than developmental or humanitarian reasons. Bigsten, Platteau, and Tengstan (2011:p11) estimated that if the European Union countries were to choose to

optimize the distribution of foreign aid for the sole motive of reducing poverty, they would need to reallocate \$19 billion of the \$27 billion of EU aid—that is, over 70% of EU foreign aid—directing it to only the 20 poorest countries. Bigsten et al. (2011) determined that “the reallocation would lead to a modest increase of poverty among the donor darlings and a large decline in poverty in the orphan countries”. However, the EU countries do not wish to optimize their foreign aid because they have economic and political purposes other than poverty reduction when they allocate aid.

Arising from the above, it can be concluded as Del Biondo (2014) and Bush (2002) noted that foreign assistance is also used predominantly to promote geostrategic interests, for the right to build and maintain foreign bases, to strengthen alliances, or to keep allied regimes in power. Bertoli, Cornia, & Manaresi (2008) and Dreher, Nunnenkamp, & Thiele (2011) also submitted that foreign aid can be a large component of foreign capital flows for many low-income countries, thus increasing their dependence on donor governments. For instance, also, the giving of aid can secure access to vital raw materials (oil, minerals, etc.). Also see the practice of tying aid.

While, Round & Odedokun (2004), Alesina and Dollar (2000:p33) opined that Colonial powers, historically, grant more aid to former colonies, Van der Veen’s (2011) research explains that Foreign aid can also be provided to increase a country’s prestige. Round et al (2004) and Alesina et al (2000:p33) cited France, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom as substantial donors of foreign assistance to their former colonies. And Van der Veen’s (2011) cited Dutch and the Norwegians who focused on matching or surpassing other Western nations in the allocation of foreign assistance.

However, Kilby and Dreher (2010) summarized by showing that in practice, states use foreign aid to achieve many overlapping foreign policy goals, including fighting terrorist threats, supporting strategically important countries, fostering relations with countries that maintain large bilateral trade or capital flows, and the championing humanitarian goals of reducing poverty, encouraging democracy, enhancing gender status, and improving human welfare.

Although, as pointed out by Thomas (1997), two basic reasons or objectives characterizes Western donors efforts toward democratic promotion. First, they are based primarily on the idea of promoting democracy for its own sake, as a political good that will improve the lives of citizens by bringing more freedom, political representation and governmental

accountability. Second, foreign democracy-related assistance is primarily anchored on the notion that democracy is a valuable goal for external assistance because it will enhance inclusive political and economic institutions. In such a view, democracy according to Thomas (1997) is less an end in itself than one component of an overall strategy to achieving sustainable development.

As has been emphasised throughout this report, democracy assistance is only one aspect of a much broader donor agenda to promote good governance. Just as there is still a continuous and a seemingly unending debate in the literature on the relationship between aid and development to developing countries, the aid analysis in Nigeria presents no exception. Scholarly opinions are divided on whether foreign aid has contributed to development in Nigeria or not.

In assessing the impact of foreign aid to Nigeria, Dreher et al. pointed out that in many of the developing countries receiving aid, poverty still looms large, and underdevelopment persists while concluding that there is no robust evidence that aid affects growth. In support, and Onakoya, (put year) posited that although, Nigeria has continued to benefit from all sorts of foreign assistance and in fact still collect at least as much as the amount collected in the early 1980s, yet social-economic development has remained gloomy. In the case of democratic assistance, her (Nigeria) political development has remained gloomy. But On the other hand, Alemu and Lee (put year) in their work on the comparative analysis of the impact of Foreign aid on Middle and Low-Income African countries concluded that aid has a significant positive impact on low-income countries arguing that criticisms of foreign aid is flawed.

Above all understanding what works in practice remains an underdeveloped area of work and engagement. Building this incipient evidence base requires the development of an integrated research agenda that connects thematic, analytical and interdisciplinary perspectives to probe the connections between international support to democracy, and the political complexities of change in ‘qualities of democracy’ as it concerns Nigeria. This is the gap.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper adopts as its framework of analysis the theory of change. This theory is simply and elegantly theory of how and why an initiative works. Building on this, Anderson (2005) defined a theory of change approach to evaluation as a systematic study of the links between activities, outcomes and contexts of the initiative. This suggest that the first step toward evaluating an initiative is to determine its intended

outcomes, the activities it expects to implement to achieve those outcomes, and the contextual factors that may have an effect on the implementation of activities and their potential to bring about desired outcome. In the broadest sense, major western donors stressed governance in their relations with developing countries including Nigeria. They believe that “progress in the protection of human rights, good governance and democratization are fundamental for poverty reduction and sustainable development” (Diamond, 1995). Thus, democratic assistance is directed at achieving an objective (credible election) to bring about the desired outcome (development through good governance and democracy).

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Having observed that democratic assistance is directed at achieving an objective (credible election) to bring about the desired outcome (development through good governance and democracy), the political ecology of elections in Nigeria have always been characterized by electoral violence which is always associated with elite manipulation of power relations process. As an objective – oriented model of evaluation, this study primarily involves determining the relationship between democratic assistance and Nigeria’s effort towards democratic consolidation (elections). Secondary materials have been used to complete the study. The results of the study are as follows:

First, Nigeria has been receiving foreign democratic assistance since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999, for promoting democratic good governance and supporting electoral conduct, with hundreds of billions of dollars translating into billions in Nigerian currency, yet her political development has remained gloomy. The just concluded 2019 General election was the sixth quadrennial to be administered by the civilian government since the return of democracy in May 1999. Yet conduct of elections have been one of the major snags of the democratization course in Nigeria. Nigeria’s recurrent efforts at democracy have not been successful because of its inability to conduct free, fair and transparent elections and this has hindered its effective democratic development. This is mainly because of the long years of military rule and its attendant effects on the political culture.

It is clear that the central problem of the practice of government and politics in Nigeria streams from the perception, on the part of the citizens, of issues bordering on the concept and purpose of democracy and politics. As emphasised in the literature and recognised more recently by donors, democracy cannot be reduced to the holding of elections. A Nigerian analyst, Claude Ake had earlier postulated

the way forward the extent that both the ruled and the rulers are implicated. Electoral democracy does not depend on the altruistic actions of other people or states. “People must do it for themselves, or it does not happen”. Problems like electoral malpractice and violence, corruption, political godfatherism, and the institutional weakness of government institutions cannot be explained outside the misconception of the essence and purpose of democracy and politics.

While Ekeh (1975) has tried to explain the origin of the problem of perception trying to link it to the effects of colonialism, Diamond (1999) has demonstrated that political culture does not only affect the character and viability of democracy, but that democracy requires a distinctive set of political values and orientation from its citizens and that politics, beliefs about democratic legitimacy is a central factor in democratic consolidation. Equally, Omoruyi (2003) has aptly pointed out that: Nigeria lived too long under the military to appreciate democratic life.... Not all people who live in a society or those who become politicians are democratic, it is an acquired behavior.

Therefore, in the context of emerging democracies where there is great need for the electoral outcome to appear acceptable to all the parties involved in the electoral process and competition, the electoral management body, the political class, the electorate and other institutions of government must demonstrate their commitment to democratic principles (Alumona, 2006:p47). Until we are willing and our perceptions about democracy changes, no amount of foreign democratic assistance will produce lasting result in Nigeria.

Second, It has also been observed from the scholastic views of Adetula et al., (2010), Abdullahi, (2015); Bariledum et al. (2016) that the amount provided for technical support of electoral conduct and training of electoral body officials as well as support to civil societies were not enough to influence the electoral process in Nigeria and foster democratic good governance because the country is self-sufficient financially in funding the entire electoral process independently without relying on external donors’ support unlike many other African countries.

But on the contrary, throughout the last decade of civilian rule, donors have attempted to fight the negative trends outlined above, while supporting the positive developments in government and civil society. Nigeria is atypical within Africa, as its vast oil wealth means that very little of its government budget depends upon donor funds. Consequently, foreign donors have much less influence than elsewhere in Africa, even at the local level. For

instance, USAID's democracy and governance budget in 2003 was approximately USD 3 million, which is less than what a single gubernatorial candidate spent on average on his own election campaign that year. The 469 members of the National Assembly were accused of receiving USD 1 million each as a bribe to vote for President Obasanjo's third term amendments in 2006 (Sunday Punch, 7 May 2006) By comparison, foreign democracy assistance budgets were paltry. In addition, some donor self-assessments note that international funding arrived late and assistance was not sufficiently coordinated (Adetula, et al, 2010).

So, even if all the donors were to halt their assistance, it would probably not provoke any significant impact. Partly because of the status of Nigeria vis-à-vis international assistance, the relevant agencies of the Federal Government have been slow to put in place an effective system for the monitoring and supervision of the activities of donors and development partners. This answers the question that Nigeria does not need FDA.

Third, this brings us to our next observation that despite the obstacles for democracy assistance, and donors' support for the Nigerian electoral system not achieving the desired results, donor agencies have found reasons to continue their interventions, which raises the question of what their real interests are in Nigeria. Perhaps, there are arguments against the role of international actors in promoting democratic transition. It has been noted while other arguments centre on the use of philanthropy to promote socio-cultural imperialism under the guise of promoting democracy, others centre on scepticism regarding the impact of international assistance towards promoting democratic transition (Jega, 1993).

What is very clear is the fact that these international promoters of democracy in Nigeria like in other "third wave", "have clearly defined goals and objectives with their philanthropic and international assistance" for democratic transition. While these donors promote democracy they are as well in the context of globalization promoting free market economy and favourable investment opportunities for their multinational corporations. It is noted that the dramatic turn of events after inauguration of the fourth republic in 1999 (Jega, 1993) both USAID and USIA reduced their funding to Nigerian NGOs while increasing to American-based NGOs which opened their offices in the capital of Nigeria. This indicates the hidden fact that international donors were more concerned in the removal of military rulers who were not ready for business with them, than in facilitating the consolidation of democracy in the country.

Despite these obstacles and the fact that the Nigerian environment remains very challenging for democracy assistance, Nigeria has enjoyed the good will of donors since its return to civilian rule in 1999. Although the relationship of Nigerian stakeholders with the donor community has not been smooth, the country has received significant inflows of international democracy assistance for its political transition and its halting efforts toward democratic consolidation. Given the susceptibility of democracy assistance to abuse and political manipulation, clear definitions of goals and processes, as well as effective coordination of interventions, are crucial. This informs why irrespective of the challenges, Nigeria will continue to receive democratic assistance and donor agencies will continue to give.

Foreign Democratic Assistance to Nigeria: Lessons and challenges.

Nearly three decades of democratic assistance and the experiences learnt have yielded many important lessons and challenges, offering significant opportunities to improve current practice.

1. The impetus for democratisation must come from within: To be successful democratization processes need to be driven from within countries and supported by key domestic actors first before foreign assistance can be effective as the domestication of democratic ideals is the foundation and key element of success. As shown in Iraq, efforts to impose democracy from the outside without the necessary domestic support are unlikely to be sustainable, and may well backfire. While external factors can play a significant role in democratisation processes, acting as triggers (as happened at the end of the Cold War, for example) and influencing strategic domestic actors, they can-not act as substitutes for domestic support when it is lacking. External governments and donors need to be both realistic and humble about what can be achieved from the outside.
2. Connecting with the grass-roots level and incorporating civil society: The failure of democracy promotion to fit activities to the local environment and give people and organisations within the recipient country a primary role has remained a core challenge. Generally, the review finds that democracy promoters struggle to connect with the grass-roots level. Democracy assistance should work with a broad range of actors, including incumbent political parties and traditional organisations (e.g. farmers' unions, faith-based organisations). Yet donors rarely engage with civil society actors in rural areas and more traditional modes of governance, despite the

fact that they may represent useful entry points for international democracy assistance. Most donor agencies have tended to work with NGOs based in capital cities. The need to work with civil society across all levels (central, regional, local) is increasingly recognised, but donors are still struggling with how to translate this into practice. In particular, donors have much work to do in terms of strengthening domestic civil society organisations so that they can become self-sufficient over time, and they should also be more sensitive to the fact that extensive reliance on INGOs may itself undermine the capacity and sustainability of domestic NGOs.

3. Reliance on an idealised blueprint of democracy that is not sensitive to context In general, a review of the literature suggests that democracy promotion is characterised by a lack of sensitivity to context. Despite differences in recipient-country standards of living, economic, political and institutional capacity and history, democracy assistance programmes appear to derive their model from somewhat idealised notions of democratic development in Western Europe and the US (Carothers, 2000: p85), and the core strategy of democracy promotion tends to pay little attention to domestic political, social and economic power relations. However, democracy assistance in a consolidated autocratic regime, a hybrid regime or a fragile democracy must take different forms. Inattention to this often results in an undue emphasis on formal, as opposed to substantial, change.
4. Achieving a balance between providing supports and avoiding dominance. Democratisation is ultimately a domestic process, therefore, foreign assistance needs to strike a careful balance, providing necessary support while avoiding any dominance of the key stakeholders and their agendas, which could create problems of legitimacy, accountability and sustainability. Donors and international organisations may push for democratic reforms and provide resources to strengthen domestic capacity. They should provide a constituency that civil society, the political opposition, courts and legislatures can depend on for support and protection. But too much aid and external involvement can negatively affect the legitimacy of domestic actors and make them vulnerable to accusations of being 'Western' or foreign. Heavy-handed donor involvement, for example, has led many critics to question the ownership of such processes and to resent what they perceive as excessive donor influence in the

domestic policy agenda. Furthermore, available evaluations show that there are serious difficulties involved in transplanting formal democratic institutions to societies and sectors where these institutions have no historical roots. Donor-assisted democratic reform projects have at times over-estimated the capacity of political systems to absorb new policies and institutions.

5. There should be well grounded training of recipients of aids which must include faith based and community based organizations before the commencement of projects.(6)The canker worm of corruption has eaten deep into the body politics of Nigeria and all institutions are affected and more stringent efforts and rules should be made to ensure that the aids are well utilized

CONCLUSION

In this study, we have tried to examine elections in Nigeria and foreign democratic assistance, with its key lessons and challenges it has placed on the future development of democracy in Nigeria. We observed that in spite of the hundred billions of dollars translating into billions in Nigeran currency, received as foreign democratic assistance for the conduct of her elections since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999, her socio-economic and political development has remained gloomy. We also observed that Nigeria as a country is self-sufficient financially in funding the entire electoral process independently without relying on external donors' support unlike many other African countries. And that international promoters of democracy in Nigeria have clearly defined goals and objectives with their philanthropic and international assistance for democratic transition, but in a bid to promote democracy they are as well in the context of globalization promoting free market economy and favourable investment opportunities for their multinational corporations. This is why in spite of not achieving the desired results, donor agencies have found reasons to continue their interventions.

Conclusively, the central problem of the practice of government and politics in Nigeria streams from the perception, on the part of the citizens (electorate), the political class, the electoral management body and other institutions of government of issues bordering on the concept and purpose of democracy and politics. There is a need to domesticate the aids to both urban and grassroots of the Nation and to train before implementation of culturally sensitive aids. Curruptionn is in all sectors of Nigeria and it's influence on these aids should be addressed through strict monitoring by all relevant stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the revelations of how the international dynamics challenges smooth experiment of Nigeria's fourth republic, the paper recommends that:

1. The citizens (electorate), the political class, the electoral management body and other institutions of government must demonstrate their commitment to democratic principles. Until we are willing and our perceptions about democracy changes, no amount of foreign democratic assistance will produce lasting result in Nigeria as the domestication of the aids are key factors as the endogenous variables determine success.
2. International institutions promoting democracy such as World Bank, IMF, MNCs and powerful countries must restructure harsh liberalization policies that are detrimental to developing world democracies such as Nigeria. Perhaps there should be a call for the establishment of international institute for democracy to regulate anti-democratic excess of transnational organizations as it affects under developed countries. Thus there is need for them to avoid disguising under the pretence of promoting democracy to perpetuate their self-centred business and economic interests. There is need for them to guarantee genuine conditions that would promote peace and democracy.
3. The issue of capacity building before projects implementation and the carrying along of the grassroots should be keyed into future aids to make them to be result oriented unlike now that they are urban based while the bulk of the people are in the rural areas
4. Efforts should be made to ensure that corruption will not continuously reduce the impacts of the aids through leakages. This could be achieved through the enactment of special laws that will regulate how aids related funds should be used in Nigeria.
5. It is suggested that further studies be carried out to focus on internal dynamics that challenges democratic consolidation in Nigeria's fourth republic such as corruption and party politics

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